

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 17, 2005

Michigan News

Michigan Crash Facts

The Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center (CJIC) and the Office of Highway Safety Planning, in conjunction with the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) compiles and publishes the annual Michigan Traffic Crash Facts. The 2004 crash data has recently been compiled. To access the Michigan Traffic Crash Statistics from 1992 to 2004 on the UMTRI website, please link to.... <http://www.michigantrafficcrashfacts.org/> To access the Michigan FATAL traffic crash statistics (and those of other states), please link to... <http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/>

Traffic Crashes Down in Michigan

"The number of fatal traffic crashes in Michigan dropped 10 percent in 2004, thanks in large part to increased safety belt use and greater awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving, says a University of Michigan researcher." The full press release may be found at the following link.... <http://www.umich.edu/news/index.html?Releases/2005/Oct05/r101205b>

NETS Feature

Event Data Recorders (EDRs): Integrating Them into Your Corporate Safety Plan

When an airplane crashes, much attention is given to the "black box." For crash scene investigators, the black box provides critical information before and during the crash, and in many cases it is instrumental in determining the cause of the crash. Black box technology is quickly gaining momentum in the auto industry and among traffic safety officials....More http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/EDR_101505feat.asp

Latest Traffic Safety News

Despite Drop In Workplace Injuries, Costs Still Soar

While risk managers, safety directors and senior financial executives cut the number of the most serious workplace injuries, these accidents continue to hit the bottom-line of employers hard, according to two recent Liberty Mutual studies. The studies found that the rate of growth in the cost of these injuries slowed significantly from 6.5 percent in 2002 to 0.7 percent in 2003. However, employers spent \$50.8 billion in 2003 on wage payments and medical care for workers hurt on the job. For more information, visit <http://www.libertymutual.com/omapps/ContentServer?cid=1029415782133&year=2005&prid=1078448761279&pagename=ResearchCenter%2FPage%2FPRESSReleaseOrange&c=Page>

Four States Pass Laws Limiting EDRs, Access To Crash Data

Arkansas, Nevada, North Dakota and Texas this year followed California's lead in limiting who can use information from EDRs or "black boxes." The devices are built into vehicles and can record a car's speed and the response of seat belts, brakes, and air bags in the event of a crash. The state laws seek to preserve a driver's privacy by requiring a court order or the car owner's permission before

insurers or law enforcement can download the data. Eleven other states considered bills in 2005 limiting access to such crash data. Read the full article at <http://www.stateline.org/live/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=136&languageId=1&contentId=58608>

The Next Big Thing In Vehicle Accessories: Satellite TV

As people spend more time commuting, the trend is to make cars more homelike and comfortable. And according to a recent report by the USA Today, the next big thing in vehicle accessories is satellite TV. While screens can be placed throughout the vehicle, the most popular location is the ceiling in the middle of the backseat. Viewers can tune into 140 channels through satellite TV provider, DirecTV. Satellite TV has many safety advocates questioning whether the technology is just one more dangerous distraction. Forty states have banned drivers from putting video screens in a place where they can see them, although there are exceptions for navigation systems. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/tech/products/services/2005-10-05-satellite-tv-autos_x.htm

Driverless Truck Almost A Reality

Driverless automated trucks are nearly a reality and will represent the future in truck optimization and fleet management, according to developers. Modular Mining Systems is currently testing a driverless haul truck at a mine in South America and said that it should be available commercially after the final phase of testing in about six months' time. During testing, the truck is driven through the central mine wireless computer network and will be able to load and haul rock without the use of a driver. Using global positioning systems (GPS) as well as information derived from the network and other guidance devices, the truck is able to determine its exact coordinates within the mine and the position of the traffic around it. Read the full article at <http://www.engineeringnews.co.za/eng/news/features/?show=74553>

Pedestrian Safety Gains Recognition In Congress

Pedestrian safety has not been as big an issue in the United States as it is in Europe and Japan, but that could change. Congress added a provision to the new, multiyear transportation-funding law requiring a fresh study at pedestrian safety. Study topics may include vehicle-based pedestrian detection and warning systems and vehicle design changes. A report is due in two years.

Crash Avoidance Systems New Trend In Vehicle Safety

After decades of focusing on reducing injuries and fatalities on the roadways through seat belts and air bags, automakers are now redirecting their efforts to address crash avoidance systems. The systems aim to prevent a crash from occurring in the first place. The new technologies allow the vehicle to react more quickly than the driver. New technologies include lane departure warning systems, adaptive cruise control, and pre-crash warnings. Read the full article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/autos/2005-10-03-car-safety-usat_x.htm

EDR Data Used To Convict Motorist Of Motor Vehicle Homicide

Information gathered from an EDR was used to convict a driver for negligent driving. A jury in Massachusetts found a driver guilty of misdemeanor motor vehicle homicide in the death of her front seat passenger. It was concluded that the motorist was driving negligently when she skidded out of control and struck a tree on January 4, 2003. Information collected from the EDR in her GMC Yukon reported the vehicle was traveling 58 mph in a 40 mph zone on an icy road. EDR data showed that the driver never applied the brakes. Read the full article at <http://www.abrn.com/abrn/article/articleDetail.jsp?id=184135>

New Connecticut Law Takes Aim At Driver Distractions

A new law in Connecticut banning distracted driving behaviors is among one of the toughest in the nation. According to reports, the new law addresses reading, writing, grooming, interacting with pets

and more. It also bans the use of cell phones, including hands-free devices, among drivers with a learning permit. Drivers pulled over for a moving violation can be fined up to \$100. At least six other states are considering similar legislation. Tennessee and Virginia prohibit pornographic videos from being played in vehicles, and Nevada, has increased penalties for drivers who kill someone while eating, applying make-up or using a cell phone.

Washington Post: Red-Light Cameras Fail To Reduce Crashes

The Washington Post recently conducted an analysis of the effectiveness of red-light cameras in the District of Columbia and found that the number of crashes at camera-equipped intersections has actually increased. The District's red-light cameras have generated more than 500,000 violations and \$32 million in fines over the past six years. Despite the results of the Post's analysis, city officials remain convinced that the red-light cameras are effective. The District's police chief says that even though the number of crashes is not going down, citations for red-light running have dropped by about 60 percent at intersections that have cameras. Read the full article at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/03/AR2005100301844.html>

Cabbies In NYC Put The Brakes On GPS

New York cabbies are opposing the installation of GPS systems, or similar technologies in their vehicles. Drivers claim that they do not want to be tracked, nor do they want the additional expense of installing the systems, which can cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 per vehicle. They also claim that such devices can be used to monitor speeding and other activities, which violates their rights. However, the Taxi and Limousine Commission states that GPS would help drivers navigate traffic, provide efficient routes, and help passengers recover lost property. Read the full article at <http://www.techweb.com/wire/mobile/171202619>

Companies Offer Innovative Ideas To Monitor Traffic

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated how traffic is hampering America's roadway users. In response, several companies are trying to alleviate everyday gridlock by providing drivers real-time information online about the worst congestion points. One of the leaders in the market is Traffic.com, which provides real-time traffic information in 24 of the country's largest metropolitan areas. It owns, and continues to expand, a wireless digital sensor network for collecting traffic and logistics data. Seattle-based Inrix uses a Bayesian machine and learning algorithms to make statistical inferences and predictions about traffic, based on variables such as weather conditions, construction schedules, holidays, sporting events, and historical traffic patterns. Circumnav Networks turns the cars themselves into traffic data-collection devices, which then share the data wirelessly with other Circumnav-powered cars. Read the full article at http://www.technologyreview.com/articles/05/10/wo/wo_100305burke.asp

President Calls On Americans To Conserve Gasoline

The President called on Americans to drive less in order to conserve gas and cut energy use. Despite the fact that damage to oil and gas facilities from hurricane Katrina was less than expected, delays in the refining process pushed the average price of gas up to \$2.80. In response to rising gasoline and energy prices, Congress might consider proposals historically blocked by environmental objections.

Guide Aims To Reduce Distracted, Drowsy Driving Crashes

The Transportation Research Board has released the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 500 -- Guidance for Implementation of the AASHTO Strategic Highway Safety Plan; Volume 14: A Guide for Reducing Crashes Involving Drowsy and Distracted Drivers. The plan can be employed to help reduce crashes involving drowsy and distracted drivers. It includes strategies in 22 key emphasis areas that affect highway safety. The goal is to reduce the annual

number of highway deaths. View the plan at
http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_500v14.pdf

Missouri To Track Drivers, Traffic Using Cell Phones

The Missouri Department of Transportation is negotiating with private contractors to monitor thousands of cell phones, using their movements to produce real-time traffic conditions on 5,500 miles of roads statewide. According to officials, the data will remain anonymous, leaving no possibility of tracking specific people from their driveway to their destination. Cell phone monitoring already is being used by transportation officials in Baltimore. Similar projects are getting under way in Norfolk, Va., and a stretch of Interstate 75 between Atlanta and Macon, Georgia. Read the full article at <http://www.columbiatribune.com/2005/Oct/20051009News023.asp>

Remote-Controlled Speed Limit Signs Could Save Lives, Help Environment

Under a new proposal by transportation planners in Tennessee, remote-controlled electronic speed-limit signs that regulate motorists' speeds based on changing road conditions and air quality could replace the standard metal signs alongside many Nashville highways. If implemented, the resolution could help clean the ozone and save lives. However, the price tag for the electronic signs could be prohibitive. The signs cost up to \$15,000 each. Read the full article at <http://www.tennessean.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20051007/NEWS09/510070385/1026/NEWS>

Automaker Addresses Intersection Crashes With Advanced Technology

Almost one million injury crashes occur at intersections in the US annually. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has found that fatal crashes at intersection were about evenly divided among non-controlled intersections, signal controlled intersections, and stop sign controlled intersections. Recently, DaimlerChrysler presented a prototype of a video-based assistance system, designed to recognize critical situations at crossings, traffic lights and turning points. According to developers, the system will enable drivers to avoid critical situations in time and help minimize crash risk. Read the full article at <http://www.new-europe.info/new-europe/displaynews.asp?id=115995>

News from USDOT

New HOS Sleeper Berth Ruling Challenged

According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) new ruling on Hours-of-Service, which went into effect October 1, drivers are now required to take eight consecutive hours off as part of their mandatory 10-hour off-duty time. The previous rule allowed drivers to obtain necessary off-duty hours by splitting sleeper berths into two periods, as long as one period was a minimum of two hours long. Carriers, drivers and unions are criticizing the amendment. The American Trucking Association is seeking legislation action to delay implementation of the new ruling. Meanwhile, states have already codified revised rulings in state laws.

Work-Life:

Web Site Helps Slow Traffic, Create Pedestrian Friendly Roadways

A new Web site is helping citizens make their neighborhoods pedestrian friendly. Called the Active Living Resource Center, the web site has ideas for making neighborhoods more livable places, including how to slow traffic. The site has links to guides for residents who want to investigate ways to slow traffic in their neighborhoods. These include; The Streets are for People, from the Transportation Alliance in New York City, and the Pedestrian User's Guide from the Federal Highway Administration. For more information, visit www.activelivingresources.org

New Report Addresses Risks Of School Travel

October 3-7 was International Walk to School Week. In response, TRB released Special Report 269 - The Relative Risks of School Travel: A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment. The report presents a method to estimate the relative risks that students face in traveling to and from school by walking, bicycling, riding in passenger vehicles with adult drivers, riding in passenger vehicles with teenage drivers, or taking a bus. It also includes checklists of actions to reduce the risks associated with each mode of school travel. For more information, visit http://www.trb.org/news/blurb_detail.asp?id=673

Report Examines Vehicle-Use Of Cars Owned By Older Americans

According to an AARP report, about 10 percent of older car owners have someone other than a spouse drive their cars. The report examines the characteristics of these drivers, the impacts of the drivers and why they drive older persons' cars. View the report at http://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/consume/dd124_cars.pdf

Report Examines Child Pedestrian Safety Efforts In 47 Metropolitan Areas

Safe Kids Worldwide recently released a report that attempts to compare child pedestrian safety in 47 major metropolitan areas and examines how different factors may influence the safety of a child pedestrian's environment. View the report at http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/SK_Walk_This_Way_Report_2005.pdf

International Traffic Safety News:

Report Examines International Progress Of Ignition Interlock Devices

The International Council on Alcohol, Drugs, and Traffic Safety released a report examining some of the successes, problems, and new directions that are under way around the world relating to ignition interlock devices. View the report at <http://www.icadts.org/reports/AlcoholInterlockReport2.pdf>

Researchers: Drivers Can Be Shamed Into Slowing Down

Research in England has found that electronic message boards that display speeds on electronic message boards are more effective than speed cameras at reducing speeds and crashes in a given area. The "vehicle-activated signs" are situated next to speed limit signs working in conjunction with an unmanned radar gun to measure the speed of an approaching vehicle. But instead of having the radar trigger a camera to take a photo of the offender, it sends the speed information to a display. A Transport Research Laboratory study for the British Department of Transport reveals that a monetary fine and point assessment has proven less effective than the broadcast signs in cutting speeds. Read the full article at <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20051006.wxwhdriver06/BNStory/specialGlobeAuto/>

UK Releases 2004 Road Casualty Report

The U.K. Department for Transport released its annual report on the number of people killed and injured on the roads in Great Britain. The report includes detailed information about crash circumstances, vehicle involvement and the consequent casualties, as well as key trends in crashes and casualties. For more information, visit http://www.dft.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0096